

FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON

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“And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”
1 John 1:3

THE twelve apostles were favored with the most intimate communion with our blessed Lord, but I can hardly say that they entered into fellowship with Him during His life on earth. Each of them might have been asked the question that our Savior put to one of them, “Have I been so long a time with you, and yet have you not known me, Philip?”

But after Christ had ascended to heaven, and the Spirit of God had rested upon His disciples, and in proportion as the Spirit did rest upon them, all that they had seen, and heard, and handled of their Lord became a means of communion between Himself and them. They were then able to realize what a very near, and dear, and deep, and familiar communion had been possible to them through having spent some three years or so with Him in public and in private, and having actually seen Him, and heard His voice, and felt the touch of His hand.

Now, since their literal hearing, seeing, and touching Christ did not create communion with Him apart from the work of the Spirit, we need not so much regret, as we might otherwise have done, that we never saw, or heard, or touched the Savior, because we also, without seeing, or hearing, or touching Him, can believe in Him, and rejoice that He said, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” And further, as it is through faith, rather than by sight, or hearing, or feeling, that the Spirit of God operates upon us, when we believe the witness of the apostles concerning Christ, the Spirit of God will bless their message to us, and we shall enter into the apostles’ fellowship.

What the apostles learned, they learned in order that they might tell it to others. All that John saw, he was prepared to speak of according to his ability, that others might have fellowship with him, and dear friends, remember that if you ever learn anything of Christ—if you have any enjoyment of His presence at any time—it is not for yourself alone, but for others also to share with you. When fellowship is the sweetest, your desire is the strongest that others may have fellowship with you, and when, truly, your fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, you earnestly wish that the whole Christian brotherhood may share the blessing with you.

My great desire, just now, is not so much to preach to you as to lead you, by the Holy Spirit’s gracious assistance, into the actual enjoyment of that which the apostles possessed, that believing, as we do, their testimony, we might thereby enter into their fellowship.

First, I am going to try to answer this question, *What is this fellowship with the Father and with His Son in general?* Secondly, I want to show you how we *can enjoy this fellowship in meeting, as we do, to celebrate the sacred supper in memory of our ascended Lord.*

I. First then, WHAT IS THIS FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER, AND WITH HIS SON, WHICH THE APOSTLES ENJOYED, AND WHICH THEY WISHED US TO SHARE WITH THEM?

Let me give you an illustration to show you what fellowship is. Yet, while I use it, I regret that it falls so far short of the truth I wish to illustrate, yet I know not of a better one. Suppose that a great plague raged in London, like that which carried off so many of the population in years gone by, and suppose that there lived in this city, a father and a son, whose one care was for the healing of others. Suppose you lived in the same house as they lived in, and that you saw the intimate affection existing

between them, and that you were in their council chamber when they consulted together as to what was to be done for the perishing citizens. You marked the resolve of the son to make a sacrifice of himself, from day to day, by going into the homes of those who were smitten with the plague. You would observe him as, with his father's smile resting upon him, he went forth to his work. You were privileged to live in the house while the work of rescue was going on, and you saw how the sick ones were being plucked from the grip of the terrible disease, like brands from the burning. You watched the father's love, and the son's self-sacrifice, and you were filled with admiration of them.

Now, that being taken as a supposition, feeble as it is, I want to ground upon that my description of what is meant by fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. You must not, however, confound fatherhood and sonship, as they exist among men, with these relationships as they stand towards God, for it is the eternal Father and the eternal Son with whom we are to be brought into fellowship and the terms that are used in speaking of them are accommodated to our poor understandings, but they are not to be literally construed, and especially, they are not to be understood in any carnal sense, nor to be applied to the unregenerate.

Well, suppose we are living in such a house as I have tried to describe to you, the first thing necessary for fellowship with such a father, and such a son, would be *mutual communication*. To live in the house where they were, yet never to speak to them, or to be spoken to by them, would be no sort of fellowship. Merely to know that there were such persons in the house, and to know that they were engaged in such blessed work as that, would not make us partakers with them, and would not give us communion with them.

We must speak to them, and they must speak to us, and the speaking, on both sides, must be of a kind, loving sort—not, on our part, that which would offend them, nor on their part, that which would imply anger towards us. That is the very beginning of our fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

There must be mutual communication between us. We must have heard the voice of God in our hearts, and we must have spoken to God from our hearts. You cannot enjoy this fellowship, my friend, whatever you say, unless your soul has learned to speak with God in prayer and praise, and unless your ear has learned to listen to whatever He says to you through His Book, and by His Spirit, through His ministers, and in creation and providence.

His voice is sounding everywhere, and in order to fellowship with Him, you must have the ear that hears, and the heart that believes what He says to you, and you also must have a tongue that responds to His voice, for there can be no true communion without mutual communication. Do you not perceive the kinship of the two words, *communion* and *communication*, communion and converse? This there must be, or there will be no true fellowship.

Now think of our illustration again, but transfer it to the higher sphere. You are living in the house, and you are yourself sick with the plague, yet suffering in that fashion, in the house where the one business carried on is the healing of the sick, I will suppose that *you refuse to put yourself under the care of the Son, who is the great Physician*. If you despise his remedies, or delay receiving them, you cannot be said to have any true fellowship with him. Evidently, you do not appreciate his efforts on behalf of others, or you would be willing to accept his services on your own account.

It is his business to save, yet you are not saved. He is quite close to you, and he is able with a single touch of his hand to heal you, yet you will not permit his sacred skill to be exercised upon you. Then clearly, you do not believe in him, for you do not desire to submit yourself to him, and it is equally clear that you have no fellowship with him, and cannot have any.

If we are to have any fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, we must, first of all, surrender these poor sinful souls of ours into His dear hands, and we must go to the Father, and say to Him, "Father, we have sinned," and as we gaze, by faith, upon the atoning sacrifice, we must say, "But although we must confess that we have sinned, there is the blood that makes atonement for sin, therefore, Father, accept us,

because we put our trust in Your only begotten Son.” This is essential to true fellowship, and as you will see, it is a part of it.

So here you are, first of all, in communication with the Father and the Son, and secondly, reconciled to God by the death of His Son—healed of the awful, soul-destroying plague of sin, and thus you have taken two steps upon the great highway of fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, and you can sing with Toplady—

*“For Thy free electing favor,
Thee, O Father, we adore!
Jesus, our atoning Savior,
Thee we worship evermore!”*

But it is needful, further, supposing us to be living in the house with this Father and Son, and desiring to have full fellowship with them, that we should have *an intelligent apprehension of the work they are doing*. Suppose we know, as a matter of general knowledge, that they are healing the sick, but we are not aware of the self-denials to which that well-beloved Son has exposed himself, or of the bountiful heart of that generous Father, who was willing even to yield up his Son to endure all the perils of the plague for the sake of those who were smitten by it.

If we do not know as much as this, we cannot have anything like full fellowship with the Father and the Son, but in proportion as we study the details of their working, and perceive the adaptation of what they are doing to the great end they have in view, we shall be sure to have fellowship with them.

So, beloved, when you are yourselves saved, study to know more and more about both Christ and the Father. Dive deeply into the great mystery of the divine purposes of love and mercy. See how the Father ordained, before the foundation of the world, that in the race of mankind, He would find exponents of His boundless love, who will make known to principalities and powers, in the heavenly places, throughout eternity, the manifold riches of His grace.

See too, how He laid upon His Son the work of healing this sin-smitten world. Study every detail that you can ascertain concerning the Father and the Son, the minutest touch upon the canvas is worthy of a century’s study, so full is every point of deep mystery and rich instruction to the soul. And I am persuaded that as you increase in the knowledge of the Father, and of His Son Jesus Christ, through the revelation of the Divine Spirit, you will also increase your fellowship with the Father and with His Son.

We advance still further *when this work, which is being done by those with whom we are in such close contact, commands our intense approbation and admiration*. Turning for a minute simply to our illustration, think of the heroic father and of his self-denying son, and say to yourself, “How full of wonder it is that these plague stricken people should be allowed to come, and howl and rage against him under his very window, yet all the while, he is living for them—how strange it is that these very people, who, in the madness that follows from their disease, even seek the life of his son, the great physician, nevertheless they are the objects of that great physician’s sedulous care, and he is ready to lay down his life for them if haply he may save them.”

You would thus find your heart going out in admiration of that father and son, and such undeserved and disinterested love as theirs would bring you into fellowship with them.

Now lift the illustration again into the higher sphere, and see through it, the grand design of God to make His foes His friends, to change rebels into loyal courtiers, to make ingrates into sons and daughters, and to uplift the heirs of wrath, and cause them to sit with Him as kings and priests upon His throne.

When you see how Christ comes down to raise this world up from the gulf into which it had fallen, and like another Atlas, only greater far, to bear upon His shoulders the weight of the world’s sin, you cannot help admiring Him, and as you admire and approve, you enter into a still higher measure of fellowship with the Father and with His Son.

You get to a stage yet further on when at last, *you are able to enter into sympathy with the Divine Workers*. Suppose (to go back to our illustration), you lived in the house with that father and son, and saw this work of mercy going on day after day—poor starving and dying people being picked up, placed in the hospital, and healed, and that great physician, the son, perpetually suffering in order that he might heal them, enduring all manner of insults and ignominy at their hands, yet always determining to save them—you would come, at last, to feel such sympathy with both father and son that the plague stricken people would be almost as much the objective of your care as of theirs.

You would be worked up into enthusiasm for the poor sufferers, and you would feel that it was such a blessed work to help in caring for them that if it were possible, you would wish to be engaged in it. You begin to take an interest in all the details of the service, and you rejoice as you hear of one and another of the sick ones being restored. You feel that you must love the self-denying physician who is giving up comfort, ease, honor, everything, to save the suffering and dying people. You feel such sympathy with him in the work that he is doing that you could kiss his feet, and when you hear of his being despised and rejected, you feel that you could wash his feet with your tears of regret that he should be treated in so shameful a fashion.

You are getting into fellowship with him now, and when I look at my dear Lord and Master, and think of the Father and the Son planning and working with heart and soul for the salvation of the chosen, and when I see sinners saved one by one, or even by hundreds delivered from sin, and made fit for heaven, my soul feels a deep sympathy with this glorious work.

Do you not also feel it, dear friends? Do you not wish that sinners may be saved? Do you not pray that they may be? Does not your heart feel intense sympathy with the eternal purpose of the Father, and the gracious work of the Savior? If so, you are having fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

I can suppose that living in the house with that father and son, *you would want to go further still, and to share their work*. If you had been cured by the skill of the physician, you would feel yourself so intensely sympathetic with him in the great work that he is carrying on, that somewhat timidly and humbly, you would venture to say, “Can I be of any use? Can I carry the medicine, or put on the bandages, or give a cup of cold water to fevered lip, or wipe a tear from a weeping eye, or sit up at night with the sick that need to be watched and tended? Or can I even clean the floor of the house, or unloose the latchets of the physician’s shoes?”

*“My God, I feel the mournful scene;
My heart yearns o’er dying men;
And fain my pity would reclaim,
And snatch the firebrands from the flame.”*

And if, as will be sure to be the case when you are doing something for Christ, *some of the patients begin to mock at you, as they mocked at Him*, that will reveal to you another phase of fellowship with Him. Then you will understand why He was so patient, for you will need to ask Him to make you patient, and when your words of warning, or instruction, or comfort are rejected, as His were, you will go to Him, and say, “O Savior, I understand now a little of what Your griefs were when You were despised and rejected of men, for they have rejected Your Word which You did put in my lips.”

In struggling to do good to others, you will meet with such rebuffs, misrepresentations, difficulties, and direct oppositions, that you will go to the Savior, and say to Him, “O my Lord, I can understand You better now—not that I am anything like what I ought to be, but even my failures help me to see more of Your sovereign patience and Your mighty love. O Divine Self-denier—You wondrous Self-sacrificer—I should never have had such fellowship with You as I now have if You had not permitted me to take some humble part in this Your great and glorious work!”

So now, you see, you have reached a point a long way ahead of where we started. You are now enjoying fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, because you have become a co-worker with God. We put our puny hand to the great work which He has undertaken, and He strengthens our weak hand to do marvels for His name's sake. He works mightily within us, and so we are able to work for Him, and to have fellowship with Him.

To come to the climax of all, I will suppose that you are living in that house of mercy which has been my figure all along, and that you throw your whole soul so completely into the work that is carried on there that you say to the father and son, "This work so fully commands my sympathy, and so delights my heart, that I am quite carried away with enthusiasm for it. I admire the characters and I love the persons of those with whom I dwell, and now I ask that all I am, and all I have, may be used for the furtherance of this work, that I may not be reckoned merely as a lodger in this house, but be regarded as one of the family, and that from henceforth, I, in my poor, humble capacity—for I am less than nothing—may never be personally mentioned again, but may be considered as part and parcel of this great mysterious firm, whose existence means nothing but good to the city, and whose influence is all being employed for the health of the inhabitants."

You know what I mean—lifting the illustration to the higher sphere—and it is well if you can say to the Lord, at last, "My Lord, henceforth for me to live shall be to do what You will, and to give myself wholly up to seek those objectives for which Christ lived here below, and upon which the Father's heart has always been set. Father, You will that the truth should be known wherever lies have at present the dominion, then give me grace, I pray You, to will it too, and to publish Your truth everywhere according to the measure of my ability. You will that the nations of the earth should be subdued unto Your Son, and become His loyal subjects, then, I pray You to put me into the ranks of the legions by whom You will achieve this glorious victory."

Brethren and sisters in Christ, you will indeed have fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, when you are nothing, and Christ is everything—when you do not live to make money, or to attain to earthly honor, or to gain comfort, or anything else for yourselves, but when each of you can say, "This one thing will I do, for Christ will I live, and for Christ will I be content even to die, so that, to the utmost ends of the earth his name and fame may be made known."

*"I want to live as one who knows
Thy fellowship of love;
As one whose eyes can pierce beyond
The pearl-built gates above.*

*As one who daily speaks to Thee,
And hears Thy voice divine
With depths of tenderness declare,
'Beloved, thou art Mine!'"*

II. Now in the second place, I have briefly to answer the second question—HOW MAY FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER, AND WITH THE SON, BE ENJOYED IN THE CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER?

As you all know, the Lord's supper is the memorial feast in which we are to show, or proclaim, the Lord's death "till he come." Come He will, and our hearts cry to Him, "Even so, come quickly, good Master!" This supper sets forth His death, and the way in which we derive benefit from it, namely, by receiving Him spiritually into our souls even as we take the bread and wine literally into our bodies, and assimilate them so that they become part of ourselves. Well then, how can we have fellowship with God in showing forth the death of Christ by means of this memorial supper?

I think we can do so first, *by coming to the conclusion that the sacrifice of Christ was an absolute necessity.* We are fully persuaded that God the Father would never have given up His only begotten Son

to die for human guilt, if there had been any other way of saving lost sinners, and also that Jesus Christ would never have taken upon Himself the awful burden of human guilt, and agreed to be bruised of the Father, if it had not been absolutely essential that He should die, or that man should, or that justice should, it must have been one of the three.

God the Father agreed with God the Son that this colossal sacrifice was necessary, my soul, do you also agree that it was necessary? Do you see that there was no loophole for your escape except through the bleeding Savior's wounds? Will you admit now, with all your heart, that the Father's wisdom was right, and that the Son's wisdom was right? Has the Spirit of God taught you that this was the best plan of salvation that could possibly have been devised? Looking all around, have you come to the conclusion that there is no salvation by works, no salvation by tears, and no salvation anywhere but by the blood of God's only begotten and well-beloved Son? If any of you have come to that conclusion, you have thereby entered into fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, for they have long ago come to the same conclusion.

Then, next, dear friends, while you are sitting around the communion table, *endeavor so to think of the sufferings of Christ, that you will in your measure, enter into the moods of His mind while He was suffering for you.* As He felt a great horror of sin, pray the Lord to make you feel intense horror of it, and let the very thought of it wound you as it wounded Him. He felt the shame of sin, then ask the Holy Spirit to teach you how shameful it is. In your mind and heart, crown sin with a crown of thorns like that with which it crowned your Lord, and spit at sin, and scoff at sin, even as sin did scoff and spit at your Lord.

Yet further, our Lord Jesus felt that justice must be honored, so feel in your soul, as you come to the communion, that the justice of God must be honored, and magnified, and glorified. Have fellowship with Christ in feeling that, cost what it may, God must never be unjust. Agree to that in your heart of hearts, and you will be having fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, while you are so agreeing. Go over in your mind, all the griefs and woes that your dear Lord endured, and recollect how He resolved that, for the joy that was set before Him, they were all things to be despised.

Do you feel that any losses and crosses which you may have to bear for His sake, or any scorn or persecution that may ever come upon you because you belong to Christ, are things that are only to be reckoned as the small dust of the balance in comparison with the glory of God? Then, you are drinking of Christ's cup, and being baptized with His baptism, and having fellowship with Him in His sufferings.

Let your thoughts travel along the road to Gethsemane, and from Gethsemane to the accursed gibbet on the hill of Calvary, in your meditation, follow your Lord, and ask Him to let you drink of the brook by the way, as He did, that you also may lift up your head, and in that way you will have fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. You may even adopt the rapturous language of Faber, and sing—

***"I love to kiss each print where Christ
Did set His pilgrim feet;
Nor can I fear that blessed path,
Whose traces are so sweet."***

Then again, beloved, I pray the Holy Spirit *to help you, and to help me, to glorify God concerning the death of Christ while we are at His table.* As you eat the bread, and drink the wine, think of what Christ suffered, and of the mysterious way in which His sufferings have brought glory to the Father's name. I do verily believe that, when Christ bore the sins of His people up to the tree, and away from the tree, the justice of God was more honored than it would have been if all the elect had been sent to hell forever. If our sins had been punished upon ourselves, with the utmost rigor of the divine law, that law would not have been so honored, throughout the entire universe of intelligent beings, as it now must be when they hear that God Himself would sooner pay the penalty of sin than allow His law to be broken with impunity.

O august death of Christ, in which God Himself becomes the sacrificial Victim, and bleeds and dies rather than that, on the spotless tablets of His law, any stain should be made, even though it should be by the finger of His mercy! Glorify God, then, praise Him, and let your whole souls extol Him for this wondrous arrangement of grace—

“So just to God, so safe for man,”—

for so you will be having fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. You probably remember that the line I just quoted was written by Dr. Watts in praise of the Gospel, and I hope that you can say with him—

*“What if we trace the globe around,
And search from Britain to Japan,
There shall be no religion found
So just to God, so safe for man.*

*How well Thy blessed truths agree!
How wise and holy Thy commands!
Your promises, how firm they be!
How firm our hope and comfort stands.*

*Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I’d call them vanity and lies,
And bind the Gospel to my heart.”*

Next, you can enter into fellowship, at the communion table *by loving Christ, your Mediator, as well as by glorifying God the Father*. You know that God loves Jesus Christ, I mean, the Man Christ Jesus, God and Man in one Person. He loves Him, not only in His essential Godhead, as He ever must love Him, but He also loves Him for His work’s sake. With what delight do the Father’s eyes ever rest on His Son! How sweetly does He say to Him, “Well done!” How does He delight to honor and glorify Him!

Do not you also feel something of the same sort of love to Christ as you gather around His table? Ask the Spirit of God to cause you to be enamored of Christ, and to make Him to be “altogether lovely” in your eyes. Pray for such a view of Him that your inmost heart shall melt under the divine passion of love to your dear Lord. Let His wounds be the charm to win you, let His spotless character be the beauty to enthrall you, and when you thus love Christ, you will perceive that, as God the Father loves Christ even more than that, you will have fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

We do not invite you to come and kneel around the communion table, for there is nothing upon it to be worshipped, but when the breaking of bread is being celebrated, we ask you to sit as much at your ease as you can, just as the last supper was instituted by our Lord. Those who gathered round that table reclined in the Oriental posture of repose. We cannot do that, nor would it be in harmony with our usual idea of what is reverent and seemly.

At the paschal feast, they stood with their loins girded, and their staves in their hands, for they were about to depart in haste into the wilderness. You have no need to do that, but you may sit at this table as one who is at rest, and so you may have fellowship with God, for do you not know that this feast celebrates Christ’s rest? His blood has been shed, His body broken, He has become food for our souls, His redemption work is finished. He has gone His way until He shall come the second time, to drink the new wine in the kingdom of His Father. Christ rests, so if you also rest, you will be in sympathy with His finished work.

Remember also that God rests. When Noah offered a sacrifice to God, JEHOVAH smelled a sweet savor of rest—not in Noah’s sacrifice, but in what Noah’s sacrifice typified and symbolized, that is, in

the sacrifice of Christ. If I may use such an expression concerning You, O blessed God, Your Sabbath was broken by man's sin. It grieved God that He had made man, because he so rebelled against Him, and dishonored Him, and therefore, the Lord had no rest. But when He saw Christ on the cross—a Man, who had done all His will, suffering all His will—God, as well as man, bearing human sin in His own person—it pleased the Lord to bruise Him, and to put Him to grief, but when He had done it, and the Son had finished His sacrifice, and come home, then the Father rested.

He could rest in His love, and rejoice over His church with singing, for the ransom price for her redemption was paid, the battle was fought, and the victory won forever. Sin was overcome, the old serpent's head was broken, hell was vanquished, and death was doomed to die, and it is now only a matter of time when the gleaming banners of Christ, lit with the light of victory, shall be borne aloft after the final fight of Armageddon, and when that is over, there shall go up this mighty shout, which every star shall hear, while heaven's heights shall echo and re-echo the strain, and the deeps of hell are stirred with the wondrous chorus of the redeemed, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth"—reigns because of the cross—reigns because Christ was there able to say, "It is finished."

Come then, beloved, and rest, for so you will have fellowship with God Himself. Let no sense of sin disturb you—no distracting thoughts annoy you. Say to yourself, "God is satisfied with Christ's work, and so am I. God has said, 'It is enough,' and what is enough for the infinite God is surely enough for me." The Lord bless you, as you come to His table, for His Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

1 JOHN 1 AND 2:1-6

May that Divine Spirit who inspired every word of this wonderful letter, bless it to all our hearts as we read it!

1 John Chapter 1. Verse 1. *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;*

You remember how John begins his Gospel, "In the beginning was the Word" and how, a little later, he says, "In him was life." The Holy Spirit seems to have recalled those expressions to his mind, for He moves him to use them again. Note how clearly, how explicitly, John writes concerning the Logos, the eternal Word. He says, "That which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life...that declare we unto you."

The facts of Christ's history on earth are recorded by eyewitnesses who could not be deceived concerning them. They exercised their various senses with regard to Christ—hearing, seeing, and touching Him again and again. They were veracious witnesses, and they died in testimony of their faith in what they asserted. And when anything has been heard, seen, inspected, and even touched and handled, by a company of reliable witnesses, the testimony of such witnesses concerning it must be accepted as true.

2. *(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)*

John and his fellow apostles were eyewitnesses of the coming to earth of God in human flesh—the indwelling of the Word of life in a body like our own.

3-4. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.*

Hear you this, you people of God! The objective of the revelation of Jesus Christ is that you may have joy—yea, that you may have a heart full of joy, and that you may know what full joy means, for

here below, we get but drops and dashes of joy, unless we are brought into fellowship with God through Jesus Christ, and then, we have the very joy of God in our souls. Oh, the delight of it! Oh, that you could all know it to the full!

5. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*

That is to say, God is knowledge, God is truth, God is purity. “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” There is no darkness of sin, or ignorance, or error about God.

6. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:*

He who walks in ignorance and sin, is in fellowship with the powers of darkness, but he is certainly not in fellowship with God, who is light.

7. *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

So that, in the very highest state to which we can attain in this world, namely, walking in the light, as God is in the light, and having fellowship with Him, even then we shall sin, and shall still need the blood of Christ to cleanse us from its stain. So those err exceedingly who say that the Christian man can or does live utterly free from sin.

Either they have lowered the standard by which they judge the actions of men, or they excuse themselves on some Antinomian principle, or else they must be altogether ignorant of the truth about the matter, for “if we walk in the light, as God is in the light,” and have fellowship with Him, still “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin,” and therefore, there is sin needing to be cleansed, for Christ does no work as a superfluity. But what a mercy it is for us to feel the continual cleansing of the precious blood of Jesus, so that, if we sin through ignorance, or if we sin by omission or by commission, that precious blood constantly keeps us so pure, that we can still walk with God!

8. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

It does not matter either, in what sense we say it. We may try to beguile ourselves with the idea that we say it in some peculiar Gospel sense, but “we deceive ourselves” if we say it in any sense whatsoever, for we have sin, and we do sin.

9. *If we confess our sins,—*

That is the point, and he, who says that he has no sins, will not confess them. He, who believes himself to be perfect, cannot enjoy the blessing described in this ninth verse. To deny that we have any sin, is to walk in darkness, and to show we are without the light which would reveal our sin to us, and if we are walking in darkness, we cannot be in fellowship with God. But to see sin in ourselves from day to day, humbly to confess it, and mourn over it, is to walk in the light, and walking in the light, we shall have fellowship with God who is light. “If we confess our sins,—”

9-10. *He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

1 John Chapter 2. Verse 1. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.*

That you may abstain from it, and abhor it, and not indulge in anything that would lead you towards it.

1. *And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:*

We are to seek to live a perfectly holy life, but inasmuch as we constantly fall short of that ideal, here is our comfort, we still have an Advocate, we still have One who undertakes our cause, and pleads for us before His Father’s throne.

2. *And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

Whoever comes to Him shall receive deliverance from sin. Neither Jew nor Gentile is exclusively considered in the offering of the atonement of Christ, those for whom He died are of every race, and color, and class, and kin.

3-6. *And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*

May the Holy Spirit graciously lead us all to this extraordinary walk of grace, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—798, 807

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